



The **Response to Intervention Summit** was held on December 6–7, 2007, at the Hyatt Regency in Crystal City, Arlington, Virginia. On Friday morning, Donald Deshler (University of Kansas) and Joseph Kovalski (Indiana University of Pennsylvania) led a breakout session titled Secondary Applications of RTI: A Guided Discussion. The session was recorded on cassette tape and then summarized. The following notes present a summary of the session and include highlights from the discussion among the presenters and the participants.

#### Presentation Notes

### SECONDARY APPLICATIONS OF RTI: A GUIDED DISCUSSION

RTI Summit – Crystal City - December 7, 2007

Donald D. Deshler (University of Kansas)

Joseph F. Kovalski (Indiana University of Pennsylvania)

*J. Kovalski*

#### PRESENTATION GOALS

- identify key features and critical issues of implementing RTI at the secondary level
- engage participants in thinking about, and sharing information and ideas about, RTI at the secondary level
- set the stage with quick presentations; participants will then share best practices or conceptualizations from states
- keep track of ideas to share with participants
- discuss preparations for implementation of RTI infrastructure at the secondary level and supports that allow interventions with a high level of fidelity – a seamless system to get kids to proficiency

*J. Kovalski*

#### RTI OVERVIEW

- RTI is about the implementation of No Child Left Behind and IDEA, proficiency for all kids
- RTI is the practice of . . . (slide 6) leading to all kinds of decision making about literacy, numeracy, behavior
- key characteristics (slide 7) plus enhanced engagement of parents (an important addition, as RTI provides the opportunity to provide information about instruction and learning rate)

*J. Kovalski*

#### QUESTIONS/ANSWERS

- Tier 1 – Benchmark Phase – exciting because teachers get together to look at, talk about, analyze, and make plans based on, data. What should we be thinking about? What is your core curriculum at the secondary level?
  - Maine – shifting curriculum to focus on state standards, meeting standards as benchmarks rather than credits, etc.
  - New York – Carnegie Units, courses, and passing NY State Regents Exams
  - New Jersey – American Diploma Project; all students take rigorous courses (college prep) with exit exams; shying away from remedial courses
  - Ohio – set of requirements that include state tests
  - North Carolina – American Diploma Project; Future-Ready Core
  - Tennessee - American Diploma Project, including a whole career strand in high school curriculum whereby students receive credits toward degrees in nursing, etc.
  - Kansas – focus on 21 credits for graduation; have the core requirements outlined.

Feels that the core curriculum should be all three: basic skills, content subjects, and study/organizational skills. Concern that an intense focus on Carnegie Units and content subjects results in quite a few students who lack the basic skills and the study and organizational skills to be successful in those classes. Would like to get basic skills and study/organizational skills into secondary/high school environment.

- Oklahoma – piggybacking on the American Diploma Project with Achieving Classroom Excellence (ACE), with graduation requirements and exit exams; finding that we do have kids who lack basic skills and organizational and study skills so they can't get through the content.

*D. Deshler*

#### **VALUABLE WEBSITES FOR ADOLESCENTS AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

- ([www.carnegie.org/literacy/initiative](http://www.carnegie.org/literacy/initiative)) Carnegie Corporation's Advancing Literacy Initiative
  - major investment in adolescent literacy
- ([www.all4ed.org](http://www.all4ed.org)) Alliance for Excellent Education
  - much of the work of the Alliance for Excellent Education in DC has been funded by Carnegie
  - 25–30 reports by national leaders grappling with issues of writing interventions, English Language Learners, other interventions, organizational structures within secondary schools, how middle and high schools can be reconfigured to better respond to the RTI logic and framework
- ([www.stupski.org](http://www.stupski.org)) Stupski Foundation
  - a report on this website puts some validated practices for adolescents into RTI framework (free download)
  - highlighted on this website are the Universal Instructional Design Principles (slide 13), which our center (Kansas University Center for Research on Learning) has found to be high leverage instructional principles
- ([www.ku-crl.org](http://www.ku-crl.org)) University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning
  - will be celebrating 30 years this summer (2008)
  - focus of work has been almost exclusively on adolescents and secondary schools
- Internet Resources on last slide

*D. Deshler*

#### **THOUGHTS RELATED TO AN RTI FRAMEWORK IN MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL**

- high school and middle school dynamics are different from those at elementary level
- fragmentation is one of the biggest challenges teachers and students face
  - teachers: to drive an effective RTI model, we rely on teachers having the opportunity to get together to talk and to work; one of big challenges – how to enable that to happen in the secondary environment
  - students: fragmentation is a real learning challenge – it is unlikely that targeted behaviors emphasized in Period 1 will continue to be emphasized in subsequent class periods throughout the day. This can be addressed through structural changes implemented within schools. A couple of the Carnegie reports have been put together by administrators who tried to bring about changes within their schools.
- startling data that is relevant to the RTI framework and underscores just how vital our

work is in elementary and middle schools, as we send kids to HS: findings from a study done in Chicago Public Schools by a University of Chicago and Chicago Public Schools consortium found that a student who is successful in freshman year is 3.5 times more likely to graduate than a student who is not successful. (Success is defined as completing 5 core classes and getting no more than one F!)

- struggling readers in middle and high school, when compared to non-struggling readers, are usually less fluent, often have multi-syllabic needs, have smaller sight word vocabularies, are less familiar with word meanings, have less conceptual and content knowledge and fewer and less-developed comprehension strategies, and typically don't enjoy reading
- while some research literature tells us that about 10% of adolescents have decoding problems, our data tell us that the number can be as high as 45–50% in some urban areas – thus, some direct implications for resource allocation and interventions

*D. Deshler*

#### **CONTENT LITERACY**

- “content literacy” recognizes the importance of the different language and literacy demands across content areas at the secondary level
- report in Alliance for Excellent Education ([www.all4ed.org](http://www.all4ed.org)) by Cynthia Greenleaf and Rafael Heller notes the different language, sentence, and knowledge structures among various disciplines
- content literacy is the door to content acquisition and higher order thinking
- higher order thinking or problem solving (a shared competency across many state standards and exams) is based on key building blocks:
  - background knowledge / subject matter success, which is based on
  - strategy use, which is hard if you don't have a
  - substantial skills base, which is dependent upon
  - language

*D. Deshler*

#### **A SECONDARY RTI FRAMEWORK: THE CONTENT LITERACY CONTINUUM (CLC)**

- a five tiered model for instruction in secondary schools
- Level (or tier) 1 - Enhanced content instruction: mastery of critical content for all, regardless of literacy levels
  - Within academically diverse classrooms (e.g., science, social studies) with critical course content mapped onto outcome exams, it is incumbent upon the teacher to mediate the instruction (enhance the content) in some way so that all kids (including those who lack the core literacy skills) can pick up the critical content that all kids must learn.
  - For example, a broad array of content enhancement interventions (KU-CRL) enable teachers, following an instructional routine, to identify critical content and to depict it – often within a graphic that is co-constructed in class with kids. Included in the graphic are critical vocabulary and critical concepts.
  - An important and necessary point: research on content enhancement shows that scores earned by low achieving, average achieving and high achieving students increase commensurately, i.e, all benefit from the instructional practice. (If they don't, some groups of kids will rebel against the teacher and the teacher will drop it.)

- After twenty years of research on content enhancement routines, our (CRL) position is not that the science teacher (or social studies teacher, etc.) should become a reading teacher when kids don't have basic reading skills; rather, that everyone within subject areas has the responsibility to enhance literacy growth.
- The critical role of the content teacher is to focus on critical background knowledge, core concepts, and vocabulary
- Content teachers must look at content they COULD teach and choose to mediate what is most critical and most difficult to learn.
- Level (or tier) 2 – Embedded strategy instruction: routinely woven strategies within and across classes using large group instructional methods
  - Strategies that good learners typically use are embedded within content as it is being taught.
  - Ruth Schoenbach and Cynthia Greenleaf explain this as providing an apprenticeship for kids in how they think about, for example, science content.
  - A teacher thinks out loud about how to navigate a chapter, how to paraphrase or summarize.

\*\*Don Deshler notes: CRL has found that at this point the line is drawn as to the kinds of work and activities that secondary content teachers are willing to do and can do it exceedingly well.

- Level (or tier) 3 – Intensive strategy instruction: mastery of specific strategies using intensive-explicit instructional sequences
  - goes beyond what can generally take place in the general education classroom
  - for students who don't get it when the teacher embeds a strategy and who need more opportunity for practice
  - instruction more intense, more specific, with more scaffolding and opportunities for practice
- Level (or tier) 4 – Intensive basic skill instruction: mastery of entry level literacy skills at 4th grade level
  - kids struggling with the acquisition of strategies probably lack core basic skills; they haven't made it over 3rd/4th grade hump
- Level (or tier) 5 – therapeutic intervention: mastery of language underpinnings of curriculum content and learning strategies
- with levels all in place, kids should be in a position to engage in higher order thinking.
- Instructional methodologies used:
  - Level 1 – Cue, Do, Review
  - Level 2 - I do it (watching); we do it (sharing); ya'll do it (sharing); you do it (practicing)
  - Levels 3, 4, and 5 – more direct, explicit, and scaffolded instruction
- with CLC, there are unique roles for each member of the secondary staff relative to literacy instruction; not up to one person or another – every person has a role.
- every teacher is not a reading teacher, but every teacher needs to teach how to read content
- literacy coaches may be necessary.
- big challenge: need linkages, some kind of overlap, seamless services across 5 levels
- content delivery is not independent of intensive strategy instruction; embedded strategy instruction must be reinforced in other places

*Don Deshler*

## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT CLC**

- Q –how to maintain content when you have kids who lack basic skills, are strategy deficient?
  - for levels 3, 4, and 5, some sort of supplemental reading class/intensive intervention, ample practice opportunities, and ways to ensure that the generalization of the learned skills and strategies “get back to” the general education classroom
  - conversation among teachers
  - some high schools setting up literacy leadership teams, configured either within subject matter or across grade levels with representatives from the different subject areas
  - opportunities for supplemental class teachers to have time to connect back to the subject matter classes
- Q – what happens in supplemental classes with kids being so far behind that they can’t meet subject matter requirements for graduation?
  - has to be role integrity across these levels – or system will collapse
  - teachers have to teach critical skills and strategies – ones that are high leverage and have direct relevance and application in subject matter classes
  - if you teach a strategy to students, provide ample opportunities to use it in content classes
  - after students have some fluency in the strategies, show them how to apply strategies to subject matter texts
  - RTI system will collapse if you don’t have relative strength across the tiers - chain is only as strong as weakest link
  - a weak 3rd, 4th or 5th tier = kids stay in general education classroom because there is no place to send them, system is overloaded, fuses blow, and teachers burn out
  - strong Tier 3 and weak lower tiers – same thing happens
  - clarification: never cross the line of having the supplemental teacher teaching the content; system breaks down; teachers teach watered-down content; kids don’t get the skills and strategies; kids don’t have the strength to get back in general education subject area classroom
- Q – with restructuring the curriculum, what about thinking of each grade as a gateway—9th grade would be core math and literature competencies, etc.
  - need this kind of thinking – about how can we reconfigure current organization. Greatest gains are in schools where the administrator(s) are not tied to status quo, are insistent on organizing structures to enhance learning (form follows function), are willing to take risks, are willing to break out of mold
- Comment – Seems like all of this requires a lot of professional development and sanctioned time for teams of teachers
  - a given – in any RTI framework, you need well-designed targeted professional development on a sustained basis and have to structure time for teachers to collaborate and plan
  - when you put together a team of English teachers and give them a couple of days to look at topics in 9–12, discuss scope and sequence and what’s critical, many marvelous things happen; they begin to look at subject matter in light of learning



needs of kids.

- Q – what are key features for team teaching between highly qualified general education and special education teachers?
  - be cognizant of research on team teaching; two meta analyses studies are not encouraging, but often both general education and special education teachers are not highly qualified

#### **COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS – INTERVENTIONS AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL; REORGANIZATION OF THE SECONDARY STRUCTURE; GENERAL AND SPECIAL EDUCATION**

- Comment – one outcome of the implementation of highly qualified teachers has been a narrowing of the continuum of services for kids with disabilities; kids with disabilities in high school are put in collaborative teaching classes, without preparation and without professional development for the teachers.
  - *J. Kovaleski*: crucial to have a level of planning that will ensure proper implementation of good ideas
- Question – suggestions for content material written at lower reading levels?
  - *D. Deshler*: a huge problem; don't have much of an answer, but look for a report by Carol Lee and Anika Spratley (Carnegie Corporation) on the Advance in Literacy website; reviewed this report and thought it was one of the most significant things coming out; addresses the issue; Carol argues that classroom teachers need to be armed with alternative pieces of reading – not necessarily text but some passage that deals with some of the critical content; she addresses the issues and how you phase in alternative passages throughout the course of a unit
- Question – in Maryland we have many middle schools with significant percentages of ELL. Where do they fit into this mix??
  - *J. Kovaleski*: form follows function; have to structure our secondary schools; look at the whole REform of secondary; ask what is high school for these kids rather than how they fit in
  - RTI in secondary – if a quarter of the kids aren't proficient in reading, then you would teach them how to read. People should acknowledge that reality and develop programs to do that.
  - *Sylvia Linan-Thompson*: some activities for ELL at the middle school level really fit in with the CLC. Embedded level practices mentioned are the kinds of things we are doing. For ELL who can't read the text, we are doing partnering activities or alternative texts like very short video clips (3–5 min) to communicate in different ways critical content. We have identified the critical and most difficult content with the possibility of a vocabulary piece. You need to really pay attention to those first two levels; the last piece, the language level, is important, as is the way we look at content literacy (academic language)
- Comment and Question – Professional development and support, getting teachers together to talk about critical content is going on in a lot of places and needs to go on in a lot more. In Rhode Island, we are trying to raise awareness of strategies and ways to embed them in content instruction, trying to figure out how to get those strategies in the hands of teachers.

Could you speak about strategy instruction at the professional development and pre-service levels?

- *Joy Eichelberger (Pennsylvania)*: plugging the professional development available through the University of Kansas – a huge network of trainers in the content enhancement and content literacy continuum and the strategies
  - Pennsylvania state organizations brought in a group that trained with the continuum, thus ahead of the game in terms of designing an RTI model or framework, for the secondary level
  - love the content enhancement – groups have gone through the training and used it with middle school and high school students who rose to the occasion, helped us identify critical content, etc.
  - critical that state leaders have a professional development plan
  - Pennsylvania now looking at the RTI framework to begin this training again
  - did earlier training with district level teams of general and special education teachers and administrators to address the issue of how to keep kids assigned to content area academics and also provide the supplemental and needed strategy instruction
  - *D. Deshler*: As a research center (Kansas University Center for Research on Learning), we are committed to bridge the research-practice gap. As we do research and come up with validated interventions and teaching materials and manuals, we have learned that you don't just turn the manuals over to the teacher; you have to provide ongoing support. We now have in place a network of 1200 certified professional developers, in most of the states.
  - for information about folks in your area who might sit down and chat with you about our interventions and CLC (which is broad enough to accommodate a host of interventions), contact us through our website – [www.ku-crl.org](http://www.ku-crl.org)
  - pre-service is a huge issue – Achieve 3000 ([www.achieve3000.com](http://www.achieve3000.com)), tied in with Associated Press, has leveled instructional materials with current content available for practice purposes; teachers can access this – don't know what the charge is.
  - *J. Kovaleski*: re: pre-service. To change higher education, encourage local practitioners, especially administrator of a local district, to demand, as an employer, that the teachers have some of these skills; have to use the market forces.
- Comment: Forty percent of the teachers in New Jersey have come through an alternate route, not through pre-service; they take 200 hours of pedagogy during first year of teaching. A graduate with a degree in math could receive a certificate of eligibility to teach math for a year and the next day get a certificate of eligibility to be a special education teacher, never having taught or had one special education class; then, if approved, get a standard certificate.
  - Question – What has worked with regard to teaming at the secondary level?
    - I am at a middle school, with wonderful opportunities and time in our schedules for teaming, based on turning points and changes at this level. I'm wondering if looking at middle school again shouldn't be a strategy in and of itself. I think we are missing a golden opportunity as we rush to drop the whole elementary perspective and get right into secondary. We could perhaps use that time more wisely at the middle school level, to work on some of these skills and back off from that content level rush to secondary content. Is any of that conversation occurring?

- *D. Deshler*: excellent point - we have to look at building the foundation along the way, K-12.
- *J. Kovaleski*: I am familiar with some middle school teams that go across subject areas but that falls apart at the high school. Maybe middle schools need to be instructionally more like elementary and high schools more like middle schools.

- Comment – Before leaving we should recognize an opportunity that we have
  - Not many classroom teachers here at the Summit but there are building leaders, district leaders, some people at the state department– all touch other people in this problem and in this solution
  - have heard from too many high school faculties wanting to live in the past: how many National Merit finalists they used to have; how the influx of a more diverse student population is hampering their success rate
  - We can take advantage of the crisis that they are feeling with accountability; the kids they were trained to teach are no longer coming to them but have gone to private schools, charter schools; most of the secondary schools are running afoul of AYP.
  - We can also take advantage of the fact that elementary school success with the Project Approach, inquiry-based, highly student-engaged instruction, is bringing a group of kids to middle and high school who pressure teachers to stop boring lectures.
  - We have a chance (you know who to talk to) to ask what we are prepared to do about this and how we will to address these issues.
  - I think teachers and building leaders would be far more interested in joining the conversation if you point toward the solution of highly engaging instruction and if we stop talking about percentages of kids.
  - For all kids it's a matter of finding the right instructional match.